



## PROBATION AND PAROLE BUREAU STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

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	Revision Date: 09/20/01; 03/14/03
Signature: /s/ Mike Ferriter	Effective Date: 06/01/00

**I. BUREAU DIRECTIVE:** Probation and Parole Bureau employees will provide timely, accurate and complete information to the public. One of the primary methods by which this can be accomplished is by keeping the media informed of Bureau operations, accomplishments, critical incidents and emergencies. In an effort to facilitate positive relations with the public and the media, Bureau personnel will strive to answer inquiries in an accurate, open and timely manner, in keeping with the security concerns of the Bureau, and in compliance with all statutes governing confidentiality, public information and the rights of privacy.

**II. AUTHORITY:**

2-15-112, MCA	<i>Duties and Powers of Department Heads</i>
41-5-215, MCA	<i>Youth Court and Department Records</i>
41-5-216, MCA	<i>Disposition of Youth Court, Law Enforcement and Department Records</i>
46-23-504, MCA	<i>Persons Required to Register</i>
53-1-203, MCA.	<i>Powers and Duties of Department of Corrections</i>
DOC Policy 1.1.8	<i>Media Relations</i>
DOC Policy 1.5.6	<i>Offender Records Access and Release</i>
DOC Policy 1.8.1	<i>Victim Rights and Notification</i>
DOC Policy 3.3.4	<i>Media Access to Offenders</i>

**III. DEFINITIONS:**

**Bureau Administrator** means Community Corrections Division Administrator, Probation and Parole Bureau Chief, Regional Administrators, and Probation and Parole Officers II's.

**News Media Plan** means written procedures that will guide public information officers in their day-to-day efforts to effectively work with the news media.

**News Media Representatives** means qualified and properly identified representatives of general circulation newspapers; magazines of local, regional or national circulation sold or offered through newsstands and/or mail subscriptions to the general public; and national/ international news services or radio/television stations holding a Federal Communications Commission License.

**News Release** means a statement or announcement relating to official public business of the Bureau, intended for distribution to the news media for publication or broadcast. The objective is to inform the public and to provide media coverage for the Bureau's programs and services.

**Offender** means any person under the supervision of the Department.

**Program** means any prison, correctional facility or service operated under the jurisdiction of the Department, or under contract with the Department.

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**Public Information Officer** means a Bureau Administrator who has been designated to handle public information duties. For the purposes of this policy, the designation "PIO" will be used to refer to either Department or program public information officers.

#### **IV. PROCEDURES:**

##### **A. Media Relations/General Issues:**

Bureau Administrators will handle the day-to-day public and media relations duties of the region or office to which they are assigned, subject to the guidance and direction of the Probation and Parole Bureau Chief and/or Community Corrections Division Administrator, in keeping with the Department's and the Governor's media plan.

Bureau Administrators will provide current and factual verbal and written information to the media; however, there may be times when the information that can be immediately released is limited due to the confidentiality, safety, and security needs of the Bureau. In those cases, every effort will be made to provide the public and media with as much information as possible and to establish times when additional information may be available.

##### **B. Access to Community Corrections Facilities/Programs**

News media representatives will be permitted access to community corrections programs, facilities, personnel and offenders at reasonable times of the day and with proper notice. The Department encourages the media to make on-site visits to community corrections facilities and programs as time and availability of staff permit. Program administrators will make every effort to accommodate reasonable requests from the media for on-site visits. The media will have the ability to interview offenders consistent with the security needs of the facility, programs, the availability of staff to arrange interviews and provide escorts, and the willingness of offenders to speak to the media. Prior to scheduling an interview, *P&P 10-5 (A) Interview/Photo Consent Form* must be signed by the offender.

##### **C. Media Spokesperson:**

Bureau Administrators will be the designated spokespersons (PIO) for the Probation and Parole Bureau. Other employees of the Bureau should not comment to the news media as an official Department spokesperson unless specifically requested to do so by the Bureau Administrator or the Director. Bureau staff is not authorized to publish or release original printed materials developed by the Department of Corrections without prior approval from an administrator or the Director. Bureau staff who wish to speak to the media as private citizens, not as representatives of the Bureau, should make those media contacts during off-duty hours, and should make it clear to the media they are representing their own personal views, not those of the Department of Corrections or Probation and Parole Bureau.

##### **D. Media Calls/Inquiries:**

Media calls will be directed to the attention of the appropriate Bureau Administrator or Department PIO, who will respond promptly, accurately, openly and honestly. The following will be taken into consideration when responding to inquiries from the media:

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1. Responses will be confined to providing information about the Probation and Parole Bureau. Comments should generally not be made that pertain to official Department activities, or operations or events at other Department facilities/programs.
2. In the case of a Bureau emergency, all public and media access may be limited. In this event, the Bureau Administrator will identify a press spokesperson who will periodically brief all media on emergencies. A media briefing center may be established, away from the location of tactical operations if an emergency continues for an extended period of time.
3. The goal of the Bureau is to maximize the flow of accurate and timely information. Therefore, all requests for information will be answered unless there is reason to question the legitimacy of the inquiry, an individual's right of privacy is in question, or there are legitimate security issues relating to the request that warrant that the information not be released.

Whenever there is a question about releasing information to the press or the public, the best course of action is to seek the advice of the Probation and Parole Bureau Chief and/or Community Corrections Division Administrator or the Director's Office. In cases where there may be a significant delay in responding to the inquiry, the spokesperson will explain the reasons for the delay and only provide information, which can be released in the interim.

#### **E. Release of Information:**

Under normal circumstances, news media inquiries will be directed to and handled by the Bureau Administrators or Department PIO. The following are some general guidelines relative to the release of information to the media and the public:

1. Information about non-restricted Departmental operations, policies, procedures, and issues, directed to the Central Office, will be released through the Department's PIO or the Director.
2. Bureau Administrators will be responsible for releasing information pertaining to the Probation and Parole Bureau. The Department PIO will advise and assist Bureau Administrators in matters relating to national and international news media requests for access to, or information about, the Bureau. Any contact from a national or international news representative must be reported to the Department PIO as soon as possible. If a local reporter's inquiry involves an issue that is deemed controversial or impacts the Department, the Department PIO must be contacted as soon as possible.
3. Bureau employees are not allowed to make official statements on behalf of the Department unless authorized to do so by the Department's Public Information Officer. Staff should refer all media inquiries about official Department business to the Public Information Officer.
4. Bureau Administrators will be responsible for notifying the media, in the immediate area of news coverage, about newsworthy incidents. The content of such notifications should be provided to the Department PIO on an as-needed basis, or in the event of an emergency, at the earliest possible opportunity.

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5. After normal duty hours, any media calls shall be directed to the appropriate Bureau administrator. If a call pertains to an issue that will affect the entire Department or will generate significant media coverage, the Administrator must contact the Probation and Parole Bureau Chief and the Department PIO.

**F. Typical Information Release Requirements:**

1. Accurate and complete information is to be provided to the media on a regular basis. Efforts to inform the public, through a wide-range of opportunities including but not limited to the media, about constructive correctional programs must be done on a routine basis in order for the public to be better informed about the Bureau's services and programs.
2. Bureau Administrators will provide the media with information about the complete range of Bureau activities. Every effort should be made to make these media contacts in a timely fashion in order to assist the media in meeting deadlines.
3. The Bureau should honor media requests for offender information that is a matter of public record. If there is a question about the legitimacy of an inquiry, or if there is an issue of confidentiality, requests should be referred to the Probation and Parole Bureau Chief, Community Corrections Division Administrator or to Department counsel. The following offender information may be released on adult offenders unless there is a restriction on the release of information, or if an offender is officially designated as an "identity protection" case:

current photograph	age
name	date of birth
gender	date of commitment or release
date eligible for parole	date execution of sentence began
date of execution of warrant	date sentenced
FBI number	fine(s) imposed
full term expiration date	good time allowance and rate
good time expiration date	incarceration date
incarceration credit time	dead time
facility of confinement	judicial district of confinement
judicial district of release	mandatory release date (if any)
court docket number/offense	race
reason for change of sentence	Offender I.D. number
release destination	sentence term
sentencing judge's name	time of commitment or release
transfer destination	time served
physical description	work assignments
nature of injury to an offender	sentence and criminal conviction record
crime committed	

death (the identity of a deceased offender will be withheld until next-of-kin has been notified or 24 hours following death, whichever occurs first. If asked about cause, indicate the need to wait for an investigation and the coroner's report.)

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4. Information regarding psychiatric, medical or juvenile criminal histories of offenders cannot be released under law. The exception to this is sex offenders who have been required by the sentencing court to register under 41-5-523(d).
5. Photographs of adult offenders may be copied by the news organizations when the PIO or the Bureau Administrator determines there are no security risks involved.
6. Media inquiries regarding staff should be referred to the Regional Administrator who will consult with the Department prior to releasing any information that is in question.
7. Adult offenders interviews will be authorized only after the Department has been provided written authorization by the offender, and when appropriate the offender's attorney, and provided there is no direct threat to program security.
8. Other information shall be released to the news media at the discretion of the Department or Community Corrections Division Administrator.

**G. News Releases:**

1. All news releases shall be forwarded to the Department PIO for review and approval prior to release.
2. In the event of an emergency, releases will be faxed from the Department to news organizations throughout the state.
3. The Department and Bureau Administrators will maintain a file of information released to the media. This file will be available for scrutiny by media representatives who make scheduled appointments to review these files during normal working hours.

**H. News Clippings/Videotaped News Coverage:**

When possible, the Department PIO and/or the Bureau Administrator should record radio or television news coverage involving the Bureau. The Bureau Administrator should forward copies of videotapes and clippings from newspapers pertaining to the Bureau to the Department PIO.

**I. Responsiveness to the Media:**

The Bureau will be administered in a way that encourages a better public understanding of Bureau goals and operational procedures. This will be accomplished, in part, by:

1. Providing prompt, complete responses to all correspondence and other requests from the media.
2. Participating in organizations and meetings that assure cooperation with other criminal justice agencies in information gathering, exchange, and standardization, including strategic and contingency planning at federal, state, and local levels.
3. Providing access to programs through structured visits for the media, as well as for community, academic, law enforcement agencies, victims and their families, and other selected groups and organizations.

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4. Responding to requests for interviews, when appropriate.
5. Meeting on a regular basis with media staff and editorial boards to address areas of mutual concern about the coverage of newsworthy events that relate to the Bureau.

**J. Written and Verbal Inquiries:**

Verbal and written inquiries from representatives of the news media will be routed to the Department PIO, Director, or Probation and Parole Bureau Chief depending on the nature of the inquiry. Inquiries, which only require a telephonic response, will be answered the same working day in which they are received or as soon thereafter as possible. Written responses will be made within two weeks of receipt of the inquiry. In cases where there is likely to be a significant delay in responding, an interim response will be provided verbally or in writing as each case dictates.

**K. Film/Movie Making Access to Correctional Programs:**

Inquiries about access to P&P Bureau programs by filmmakers, writers for non-news magazines and others shall be directed to the Department PIO. Permission for access by these individuals will be considered on a case-by-case basis after consultation between the Director and the program administrator, and will be subject to the same rules regarding offender confidentiality.

**L. Denial of Media Access:**

The Director, department, public information officer, or Bureau administrator may deny media access when the Director or designee has declared that a state of emergency exists. The emergency restriction will be lifted as soon as possible without jeopardizing the safety and security of the Bureau. During emergencies, regular media briefings will be scheduled to ensure the flow of timely information to the extent possible.

**M. Related Policies:**

In order to fully understand policy requirements associated with Media Relations, it is required that reference be made to policies DOC 3.3.4 Media Access to Offenders and DOC 1.5.6 Offender Records Access and Release.

**N. Juvenile Information:** All inquiries regarding juvenile offenders shall be referred to the Juvenile Division Administrator, Department's PIO or the respective facility PIO.

**V. CLOSING:** Questions concerning this procedure shall be directed to the Probation and Parole Bureau Chief or Regional Administrator.

**Forms**

P&P 10-5 (A) Offender Interview/Photo Consent Form